

CPYRGHT

President Kennedy's
news conference,
April 21, 1961

Information

Q. Mr. President, sir, since last Saturday a certain foreign policy decision has given rise to many conflicting stories. But during that time reporters in Washington have noticed that there has been a clamming up of information from formerly useful sources.

To my knowledge the State Department and the White House has not attempted to take a representative group of reporters and say, "These are the facts as we know them," and this morning we are not permitted to ask any further questions about this foreign policy situation.

In view of the fact we are taking a propaganda lambasting around the world, why is it not useful information, sir, for us to explore with you the real facts behind this, or our motivations?

A. Well, I think in answer to your question that we have to make a judgment as to how much we can usefully say that would aid the interest of the United States. One

of the problems of a free society, a problem not met by a dictatorship, is the problem of information.

A good deal has been printed in the paper and I would not be surprised if those of you who are members of the press would be receiving a

lot of background briefing in the next day or two by interested people or interested agencies.

There is an old saying that victory has 100 fathers and defeat is an orphan. I would not be surprised if information is poured into you in regard to all of the recent activities.

Now, I think we see some of the problems, to move from this particular case into the problem of space, where in the Soviet Union no reports were made in regard to any experiments that they carried out on "our man in space."

And I saw in a national magazine where some student said the Americans talk a good deal about their man in space, and the Soviet Union says nothing and yet it wins. That is one of the problems of a democracy competing and carrying on a struggle for survival against a dictatorship.

But I will say to your, Mr. Vanocur, that I have said as much as I feel can be usefully said by me in regard to the events of the past few days.

Further statements and detailed discussions are not to conceal responsibility because I am the responsible officer of the Government, but merely—and that is quite obvious—but merely because I do not believe that such a discussion would benefit us during the present difficult situation.

I think you will be informed, and some of the information, based on what I have seen, will not be accurate.

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